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BAUCUS SLAMS CUT TO MILITARY RETIREES HEALTH CARE IN RYAN BUDGET PROPOSAL

House Republican Bill Would Cut Benefits, Increase Costs for Military Retirees

Washington, DC – Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) today slammed a provision in the House Republican’s budget proposal that would drastically cut health care benefits and increase costs for America’s retired military personnel. Military Retirees over the age of 65 currently receive health care benefits through Medicare, which provides guaranteed coverage for their health care needs at low, fixed costs such as co-pays and deductibles. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the House proposal would “end Medicare as it exists today” and replace it with a voucher-like payment sent directly to private insurance companies. Under this voucher proposal, military retirees would no longer have guaranteed coverage and costs would increase significantly.

“If anyone deserves the guarantee of the best health care America can give, it’s our retired military men and women, and there’s no way I’ll stand by to see them lose their coverage,” said Baucus. **“The House budget proposal takes Medicare dollars and Medicare benefits away from military retirees and puts it in the hands of insurance company bureaucrats – and that’s unacceptable. These brave men and women have given decades of service and we absolutely won’t allow anyone to ask them to sacrifice even more just to receive the health care they need.”**

Under the House voucher plan, future military retirees over the age of 65 would lose the guarantee of Medicare coverage and would instead be forced to find a private health insurance plan. This would require military retirees to wade through significant paperwork and fine print to find a private plan that covered their medical needs.

The voucher that private insurance companies would receive under the House plan would not be sufficient to purchase many of the benefits provided today under Medicare today. In fact, the independent, non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has said that the House proposal would double out-of-pocket costs for Medicare beneficiaries, simply to keep the same benefits Medicare provides today.

Under the House plan, private insurance companies would be allowed to discriminate against military retirees with pre-existing medical conditions such as high-blood pressure and diabetes. And, insurance companies would be allowed to charge retirees more as they grow older and if they develop expensive conditions, including cancer.

The Republican budget also cuts more than \$2 trillion in other critical health care services military retirees and seniors depend on. These cuts would significantly affect access to nursing home and home health care services for retirees.

Baucus said that he supports efforts to balance the Federal budget, but insists that proposals are responsible and protect veterans. Baucus was a key author of the Affordable Care Act, which created new benefits in Medicare and made the program more fiscally sustainable, extending the fiscal solvency of the program by an additional twelve years, to 2029.

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